THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI KABINDRA PURKAYASTHA): (a) The TRAI, formed under the TRAI Act 1977, has brought out a Consultation paper on Telecom, pricing, suggesting a rebalancing of telecom tariffs. The same is being discussed by TRAI with service providers, various consumers organisations and the general public to ascertain their views.

(b) The proposals are summarised at Annexure *(See* Appendix 185, Annexure No. 35)

(c) and (d) The representations received from various individual consumers and consumer organisations have been/ are being forwarded to TRAI for necessary action. The Department of Telecom, as a service provider, has also studied the proposals of the TRAI as well as the comments of the public on the proposed re-balancing of tariffs and has submitted of TRAI its response, generally favouring less increase in rental and less reduction in long distance rates.

Development of Telecommunications in Assam

1279. SHRIMATI BASANTI SARMA: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state:

(a) the funds allocated/utiliscd for development, expansion and upgradation of telecommunication system in rural/urban areas of Assam during the last three years;

(b) whether the pace of development and expansion of telecommunication in rural areas of the State has been very slow during this period; and

(c) if so, the steps proposed to be taken by Government in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI KABINDRA PURKAYASTHA):

(a) The funds allocatcd/uitiliscd for development expansion and upgradation of telecommunications system in rural/urban areas of Assam during the last three years are given below:

Funds allocated
(Rs. in crores)

	Urban	Rural (inc. Tribal)
1995-96	46.68	15.83
1996-97	50.46	39.19
1997-98	80.49	39.43

Funds Utilised
(Rs. in crores)

	Urban	Rural (inc. Tribal)
1995-96	56.84	5.20
1996-97	76.02	14.69
1997-98	95.11	27.33

(b) No, Sir.

In spite of the difficult working conditions, the pace of development and expansion of telecom, facilities has been satisfactory. All exchanges, including rural exchanges, in Assam are electronic and connected to national subscriber Trunk Dialling network. All district and sub divisional HQs in Assam also have international and national Subscriber Trunk Dialling connectivity.

(c) In addition, development Plans for Assam & NE have been accelerated in the 9th Plan period to make:

— Telephones on demand available by March, 2000, well ahead of All India target.

— STD facility on reliable media to all exchanges by the year 2000, in advance of rest of India.